

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 628

By Gillespie

A RESOLUTION to recognize the United Spinal Association upon its seventy-fifth anniversary.

WHEREAS, the United Spinal Association is a leading national advocacy organization and service provider for people, including veterans, with spinal cord injuries and neurological disorders, their loved ones, care providers, and personal support networks; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, a group of returning veterans from World War II in New York, New York, formed the organization now known as the United Spinal Association to address the needs of paralyzed veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, members of this organization advocated for and secured the first accessible housing bill in the United States, Public Law 80-702, which provided federal funds for the building of accessible homes for paralyzed veterans; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, members of this organization advocated for the passage of the Architectural Barriers Act, which guarantees equal access to federally funded buildings and facilities for wheelchair users and all Americans with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, James J. Peters, who would later lead United Spinal Association, exposed the deplorable conditions that paralyzed Vietnam veterans faced at the Bronx Veterans Administration Hospital with an article in *LIFE* magazine, leading the Veterans Administration to establish a national spinal cord injury service office to address the needs of paralyzed veterans and the renovation of the Bronx VA Hospital, which was later named in honor of Mr. Peters; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, New York City settled a lawsuit initiated by the United Spinal Association, agreeing to make all city buses, key subway stations and commuter rail stations, and all new transit stations accessible to wheelchair users, and established a paratransit system

for those unable to use mass transit, leading to a model that would be incorporated as part of the transportation provisions of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act; and

WHEREAS, regardless of an individual's ability level, the United Spinal Association seeks to build an inclusive world that removes barriers, particularly for wheelchair users; embraces the talents of all people with disabilities to achieve their full potential; and provides people with disabilities equal opportunities to pursue their interests and dreams; and

WHEREAS, the United Spinal Association continues to support and advocate on behalf of more than two million Americans living with spinal cord injuries or neurological disorders, as well as all veterans, through proven programs and services that nurture innovative self-reliance, advocacy, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, the organization also fulfills its mission by empowering its members, their loved ones, care providers, and stakeholders with resources, one-on-one assistance, and peer support; promoting independence through employment opportunities and inclusion into mainstream society; and advocating for greater disability rights, including access to health care, rehabilitation, mobility equipment, transportation, community services, and the built environment; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of James J. Peters, who once described the straightforward strategy in advocating for Americans with disabilities as simply refusing to accept no for an answer, is alive and well throughout the United Spinal Association; and

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that we recognize this exemplary organization on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we join in honoring the United Spinal Association on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary, extending our gratitude for the organization's significant contributions

to the lives of Americans with disabilities and veterans and commending its continued role in supporting and advocating for people with spinal cord injuries and neurological disorders, as well as all veterans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.